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A project designed to prepare both special and regular classroom teachers for dealing effectively with the needs of educationally handicapped children is discussed. A multicisciplinary team was brought into a school for 1 month to provide teachers with training and guidance in effective teaching methods and techniques for meeting the problems in their setting. The project provided a laboratory setting where teachers, interns, and trainees could obtain realistic experience with learning problems. The planning, operation, and evaluation of the project are discussed. Criteria for evaluation included (1) the degree to which the rate and quality of pupil learning was modified and (2) the degree to which teachers exhibited changed instructional behavior in the classroom. Emphasis was placed on the most effective utilization of all learning resources. (RT)

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PROJECT METHODOLOGY

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Our classroom teachers appear to be increasingly frustrated by their inability to find means for helping children with learning problems in the classroom milieu. Administrators and specialists have often been equally frustrated by their limited ability to provide concrete and viable assistance to the classroom teacher who is daily confronted with large numbers of complex learning problems. Special programs such as the Educationally Handicapped program in California have stimulated a more keen awareness of the nature and possible extent of the problem but have been of limited help to the classroom teacher. Ultimately, the classroom teacher must become more knowledgeable about ways that assistance can be rendered effectively. The numbers of children with learning disabilities has been estimated at 10% or more of the classroom population. Yet only 2% can be placed in special programs in California. In some states, the number of special placements available is considerably less.

Even if it were possible to place all children in special classes, special education teachers are usually not equipped to deal with the problems they encounter in these classes. Both the special education teacher and the classroom teacher must have an opportunity to develop the skills and insights which will enable them to deal effectively with the special and individual needs of the handicapped child.

The preparation of these teachers cannot be left entirely to colleges and universities. The critical needs cannot be met in

this way in the foreseeable future. We must seek innovative ways to prepare both special and regular classroom teachers on the job. We must develop newer and more effective models for the transmission of instructional technology. Remedialdiagnosis: The Marin County Implementation Study is an attempt to explore the potential of one such model.

In this project a multidisciplinary team is brought into the school setting for a period of one month. Eight teachers, eight pupils and other school staff members are included in the project. The classroom teacher is released by a substitute for one hour each day during which time she works individually with a pupil from her class for one-half hour and consults individually with our resource teacher for one-half hour. Our resource teacher works with four teachers five days per week. The psychiatrist, neurologist and other members of the multidisciplinary staff are involved in the project at least one full day each week. Noon discussions are individualized daily for all faculty members and interested members of the community, and two after-school seminars are held each week. Parents and others have many opportunities for observation. The teachers and specialists have an opportunity to learn the methods and techniques in the setting where the problems occur. Teachers have an opportunity to work with real problems and with all of the variables which enhance or otherwise mediate the effectivenss of solutions which are attempted. Teacher education is conducted with familiar pupils where the conrete realities of the problem are

cogent and often somewhat painful. The teacher and specialist are provided with an instructional environment where they have at least a rudimentary introduction to application of the experimental method. We hope this shift from a search for etiology by specialists to the testing of instructional hypothesis by classroom teachers will lead to more productive learning.

All persons in the child's life space who do or can influence learning are included in the program.

The child becomes an active participant in the assessment and planning. The child is the most logical but frequently most neglected source for data. We sometimes burden ourselves with doubtful inferences based upon diagnostic tests when the child is available to provide more relevant and less inferential data based upon his own conscious experiences with learning.

The classroom teacher shares the center of the stage with the child as she plans instructional and evaluation activities. She plans diagnostic activities such as criterion referenced tests and shares concerns and questions with our resource teacher and other consultants. However, the primary learning occurs through teaching and observing the pupil.

The building administrator is involved actively throughout the planning, operational, and evaluation phases of the monthly projects. Without the support, involvement, and cooperation of the Principal and other administrators, the range of possible solutions is necessarily narrowed and limited. To a substantial degree, the Principal will provide a facilitating or a constraining

influence as teachers attempt to integrate methods and techniques into the continuing educational program of the school. The Principal, together with classroom teachers and specialists, establishes the parameters of the training project both during the month of active involvement and during the weeks and months after the project moves on.

Through conferences, observations, and home visits, parents of participating pupils and other interested parents in the community are involved in the project. By participating in joint conferences with parents and members of the multidisciplinary staff, teachers learn how to conduct more fruitful and productive parent conferences. Through these same conferences, parents gain further insights into their participatory role with the classroom teacher or specialist who is developing a more optimal learning situation for their child and other children in the school.

The child's physician is invited to observe and participate during the month. Many potentially valuable insights can be gained by the school staff from the family physician. Members of the multidisciplinary staff can act as bridges to the medical community. Physicians can be of greater assistance to the parent and child if they are familiar with the complex and interrelated variables which influence and often determine the limits and quality of the child's learning in school.

By conducting the program in the school setting, teachers and other professionals have an opportunity to observe and work

with peer relationships which influence the learning behavior of the child. Both effectiveness and generalizability of solutions are enhanced by the concurrent attention to other pupils in the milieu.

Finally, other teachers in the school, both former teachers and cooperating teachers now involved with the same child, are included in the project activity. It is hoped that this dimension of the project will enable educators to move away from the repetitive and non-cumulative postures of the past. "Each teacher does not have to start over with each child each year."

A third major component of the project is the projected and present involvement with institutions for professional and teacher education. The project provides a laboratory setting where interns and trainees can obtain realistic experience with learning problems in the environment where they are later to deal with the problems.

A fourth component of the project is the attempt to organize and provide some redirection to the Special Services personnel in the district. Specialists have an opportunity to work closely with their counterpart on the multidisciplinary team and share questions and insights. In addition, assistance is provided where the district wishes to develop a team effort in the pupil personnel services. Two of the three districts have now begun to develop such teams. One of the major contributions of the project may be the reorganized and re-defined services which become increasingly

available to the classroom teacher.

The project is physically incorporated into a school for four weeks. There are now three elementary school districts involved in the project (15 elementary schools) with plans to expand to other districts during subsequent phases. Project activities are conducted both in the classrooms and in a mobile unit which is moved each month. The mobile unit has been found to serve many purposes:

1. The unit provides space for individual or small group instruction. In some cases, the new physical environment may encourage fresh approaches to old problems.
2. The unit enables the project to introduce large numbers of additional personnel into an already heavily taxed facility.
3. The mobile unit also provides space for seminars, parent conferences, a professional library, administrative activity, and other necessary activities of the project,

Each month's activity seems to fall into roughly three categories: planning, operation, and evaluation. These will be discussed in this order.

The planning for a monthly project begins at least three weeks before the actual project moves in. This means that planning for the next project usually begins one week after the current project has been initiated. During this time, staff members meet first with the building administrator and then with the entire school staff.

The purposes of the project are explained and possible operational patterns are delineated. The constraints and limitations of the project are also defined. An attempt is made to place the project staff at the disposal of the school staff and to modify planned activities to meet the ideosyncratic needs of each school. The project staff attempt to act more as consultants than as administrators as the needs and interests of the school are identified and accommodated. The degree of success of the project may well be determined by the quality of the planning which takes place during this time, particularly in terms of how involved school staff are in decision-making.

During the three week period, pupils are identified for inclusion in the project. While no inflexible criteria for selection are provided, some guidelines are suggested. The principal and most critical suggestion would be that the teacher select a child that she thinks she can learn <u>from</u> and needs to know much more about a child who is representative of a problem she is concerned about. After selection of teachers and pupils, home visits are made by a member of the project staff and classroom teacher, if possible. Finally, all students are pretested during the week prior to the project.

The operational phase of the project can be divided into discrete but hopefully interrelated activities. Since many of these activities occur concurrently, the order of discussion is not meant to suggest a sequence and certainly not priorities.

1) 1-to-1 teaching

The classroom teacher and resource teacher spend approximately one-half hour each day with each child. This time is perhaps the core of the project, the sine qua non for pupil and teacher growth. During this time, an attempt is made to assess the learning style of the pupil and to develop better understanding of his strengths and weaknesses, particularly strengths. The teacher is helped to focus on how the pupil learns best and upon what he can do and then is assisted in the development of some instructional hypotheses. Attention is focused upon testing through teaching.

2) Classroom instruction

Where possible, our resource teacher and other project staff members are encouraged to work with the teacher in the classroom. In this way, small group and total group variables can be modified and restructured. This may be one of the more important activities if the desired transfer from 1-1 to the classroom is to take place.

3) Consultation with our resource teacher

During a second half-hour each day, the classroom teacher has an opportunity to meet and consult with our resource teacher. Substitute teachers release classroom teachers for instruction and consultation. Together with the individual teaching, this time is perhaps the most critical and valuable time spent during the month. Concepts and methods,

particularly the methodology of the project are taught in these sessions. For many teachers, this may be an initial experience with joint planning and evaluation. The skillful resource teacher who develops a positive relationship has an opportunity to discuss not only concepts but also teacher attidues and similar teacher variables which influence the learning process.

4) Staff consultation

In addition to consultant assistance from the resource teacher, the classroom teacher or other specialists are able to meet individually with other members of the multidisciplinary staff. Staff members are encouraged to function as assistants rather than as experts. With the insights from their respective disciplines, consultants are often able to help the teacher to modify her set toward a particular child or toward an instructional phenomenon. The teacher is encouraged and assisted as she attempts to ask different and perhaps more relevant questions. The specialized data provided by staff members should enable her to develop more valid hypothesis and solutions. Perhaps most importantly, she learns to use other resources and to share effort.

5) Administrator participation

Throughout the project, the administrator maintains an active role. He is a guide and a source of data for teachers and project staff. He maintains a leading role in the project by

acting as chairman for all seminars and by participating in all scheduling and other administrative activities. The administrator must reorganize the school to accommodate the project during the month and often reorganize some aspects of the school permanently in order to facilitate the inclusion of new methods and functions in the school program.

6) Seminars

During the month, seminars are provided in the mobile unit daily. The content of the seminars is tailored to meet the needs and interests of the individual staff members in the building. All members of the project staff participate and work toward the goal of helping the teacher to gain a multidisciplinary conceptual background. In addition, innovative and unique techniques, equipment, and materials are presented and discussed. All staff members in the building are invited to attend the seminars as are parents and interested members of the community.

Lengthy seminars are held in the mobile unit two afternoons each week. The afternoon seminars are a major part of a graduate school extension course offered each month to participating teachers. During the afternoon, the overall progress of the project is assessed, needs are identified, and plans are made for needed changes. A portion of the afternoon time is also devoted to presentations of ideas and concepts. An effort is made to relate the presentations and

discussions to needs which are identified in each group. Most importantly, each child is discussed at length in the seminar where all staff members and consultants are able to contribute data gained through the project and to offer plausible suggestions based upon their unique experiences and background. It is during this "staffing" that an attempt is made to develop an integrated and global picture of the status and needs of each child. Attendance at afternoon seminars is limited to the professional staff of the building and to the project staff.

7) Professional library

A carefully selected professional library is available in the mobile unit for all teachers. Teachers are encouraged to read widely during the project. A list of suggested readings is provided. Realistically, staff members can only be introduced to the literature during the brief time available. However, a selected library of books is left at each school at the conclusion of the month. Also, the project staff has attempted to insure that the professional libraries of each district are augmented in order to facilitate continued staff improvement.

8) Equipment.

Through the project, teachers are afforded an introduction to and firsthand experience with various newer materials and equipment. A wide range of materials and equipment are

available in the unit. Teachers are encouraged to experiment with these either in the unit or in the classroom. Equipment such as the language master and tape recorder have been used for the first time by many teachers. Teachers have been introduced to programmed texts, concrete teaching aids, multisensory teaching approaches and to a host of criterion referenced, diagnostic achievement tests. After a child and teacher are introduced to new equipment and materials, an effort is made to insure that instruction with the material or equipment can continue after the project leaves. While perhaps not a dramatic component of the project, this exposure to equipment and materials has been found to be very necessary if teachers are to have instructional alternatives to meet the learning needs of each individual child.

9) Dissemination

Internal and external dissemination continues throughout the project. In-service meethings are held with professional staff members in all three districts. Project staff members meet with parent groups to explain the purposes and methods of the project. Increased community awareness of the need for this type of service will be necessary if the services are to be expanded and institutionalized. Various publications have also been used to increase community and professional awareness and support. Visitors to the project are welcomed.

10) Project staff education

Weekly meetings of the project staff are held to provide continuity in the project and to insure a coherent approach to each individual project. Additional learning opportunities are provided through discussions and demonstrations. Occasional lengthy sessions are held for evaluation and for special activities. The major vehicle for staff learning is, of course, the daily work in the project.

Numerous means have and will be used for evaluations of the project.

In the final analysis, the effectiveness of the project will be determined by the degree to which the rate and quality of pupil learning is modified. Achievement tests and behavioral data are obtained on all pupils as pretests and at specified periods after the project has left the school.

A second major criterion for evaluating the effectiveness of the project is the degree to which the teachers evidence changed instructional behavior in the classroom after the project has left. If the project is effective, the teacher should be able to generalize principles and methods to other members of her class. At the present time, the project does not have adequate staff members to follow up each project as thoroughly as we would wish, though some return visits are made.

Finally, other measures of the effects of the project

can be identified. The number of similar teams which form in the individual school districts would be one example of this type of measure. Other evidences of changed and perhaps more effective uses of resource personnel might also be considered as a criterion. Certainly, one of the prominent objectives of the project is to encourage and perhaps insure better utilization of all learning resources. The major contribution of this project may not be the dissemination of new ideas and concepts but rather the reorganization of existing resources to provide better solutions to the critical learning problems of handicapped children.